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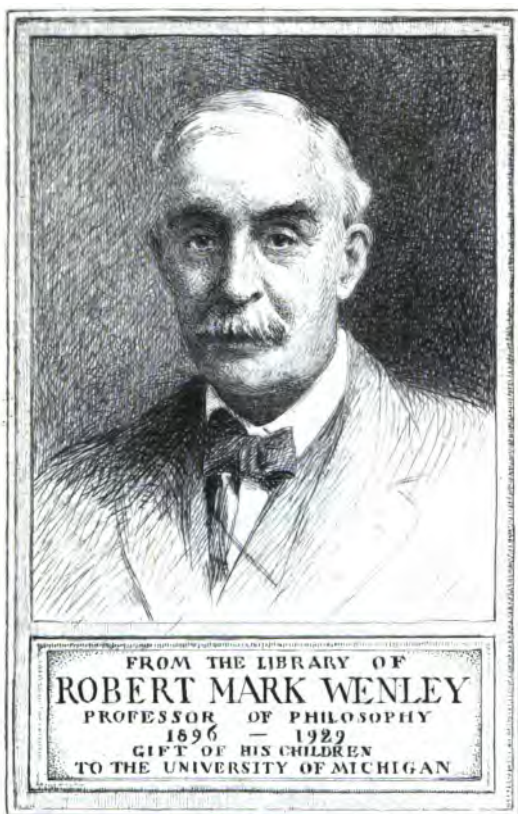
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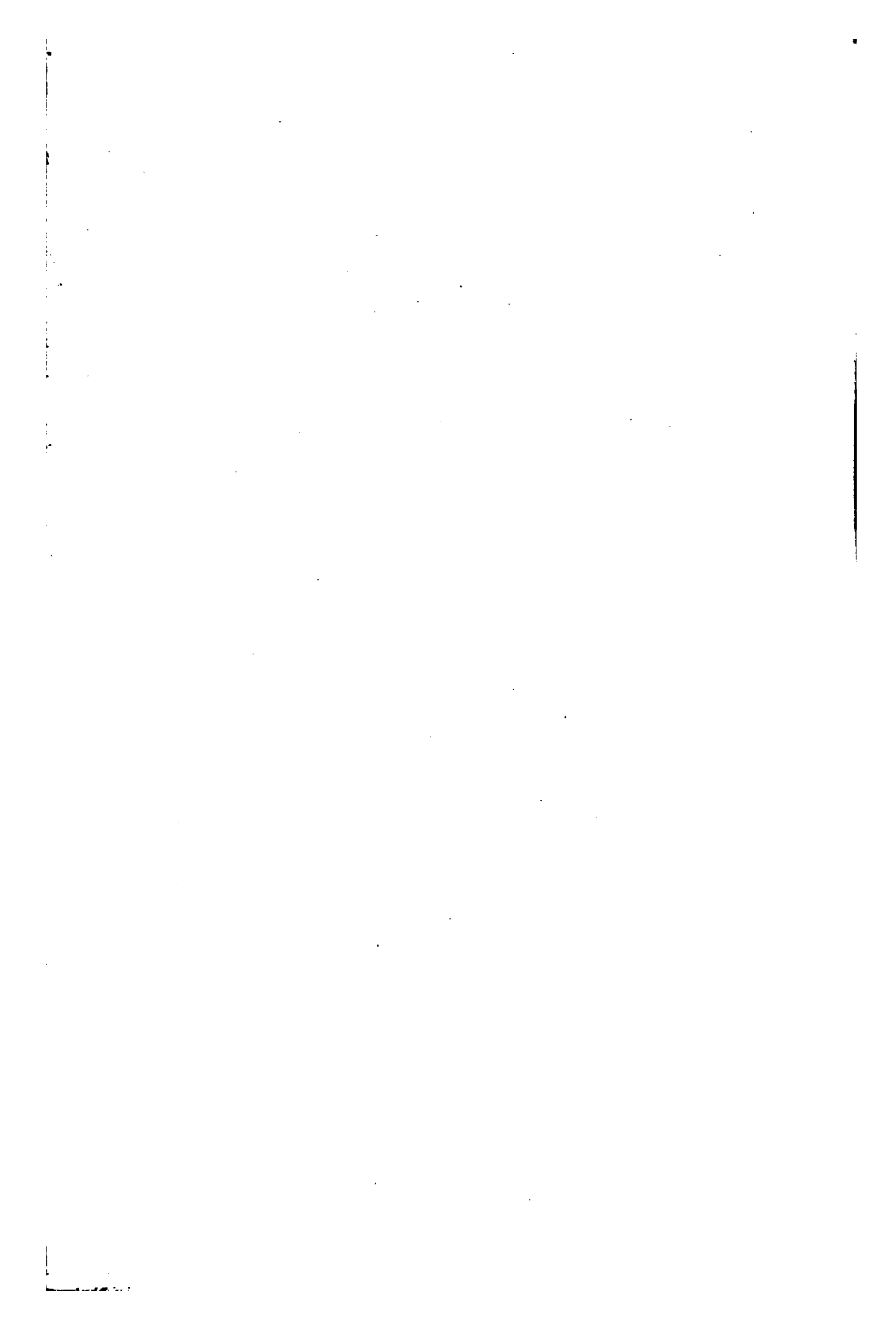


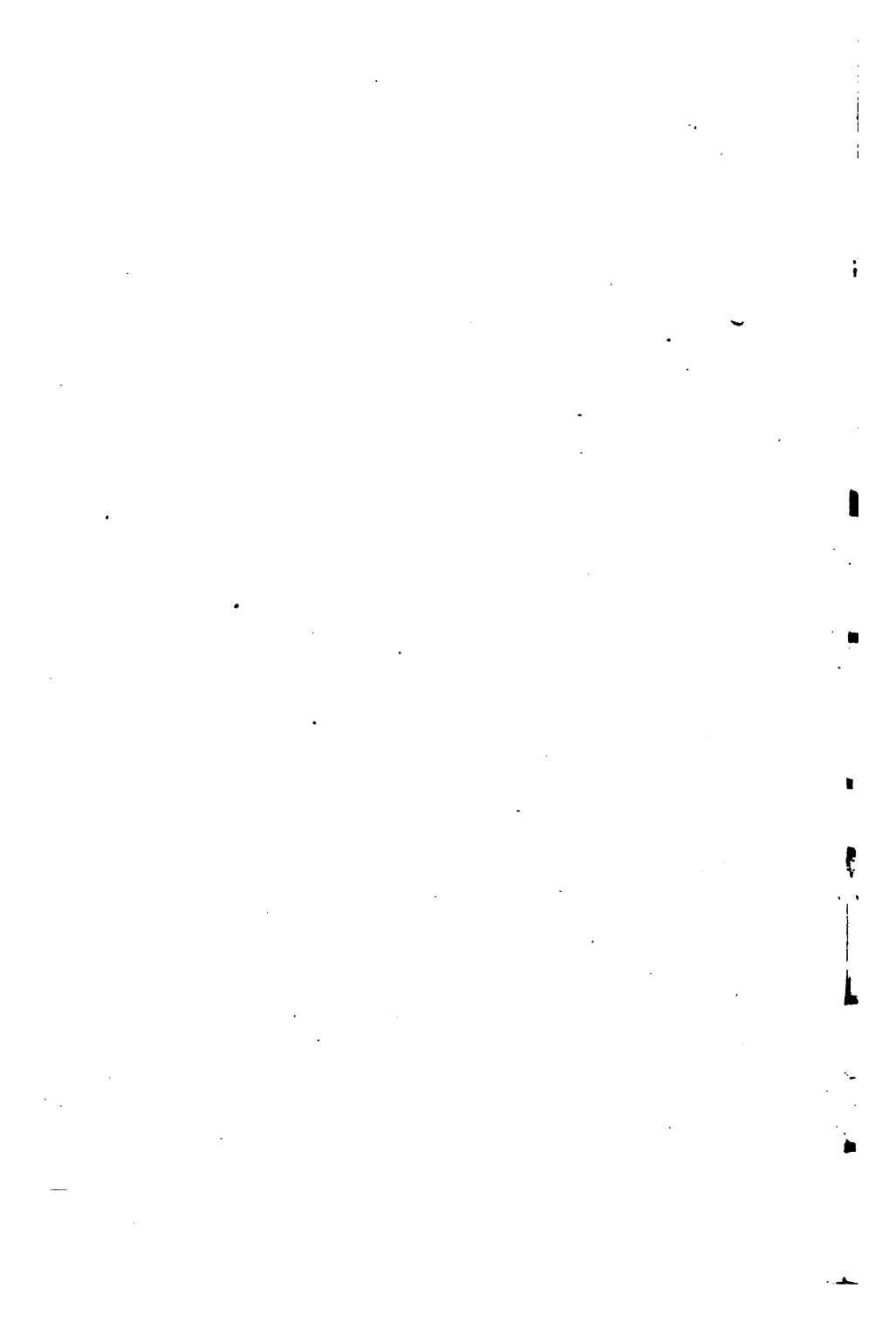
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ASSYRIOLOGY

*ITS USE AND ABUSE IN OLD TESTAMENT
STUDY*

BY

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NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1885

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**TROW'S
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NEW YORK.**

1-13-39

2-24-39 J.A.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

It is the custom, in the Union Theological Seminary, to have each year of study opened with a public discourse from one of its Faculty. The following pages contain an address, given pursuant to this custom, September 18, 1884, in the Adams Chapel, Lenox Hill. In its printed form the illustrations are somewhat more copious than they could be in its oral delivery, a few verbal alterations have been made, frequent references added, and a bibliography appended. It is issued, without other change, as a slight contribution to the literature of a momentous subject.

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
NEW YORK CITY, March 31, 1885.

ASSYRIOLOGY:

ITS USE AND ABUSE IN OLD TESTAMENT
STUDY.

MR. PRESIDENT,

Brethren, and Friends of the Seminary:

You will understand the hesitation with which, at our first public meeting in this new home of the Seminary, when our circumstances and surroundings all point toward the future, and the most fitting word would seem to be one that should be born of the occasion, and express its significance, I venture to lead your thoughts backward to an ancient and long-buried civilization, remote from our own, not only in time and locality, not only in re-

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lationships of blood and language, but in almost all its conscious interests and aims. It would be wholly out of place to do so, if we were not Bible students, and if, in the surprising revolutions of history, it were not given to this forgotten people to come once more to the front, throwing light on old problems and opening fresh avenues to discovery for the Old Testament scholar.

The product of each new source of knowledge is apprehended only by slow degrees. A long time is needed to exhaust it. Patient thought is needed to set it in its right relations with the stock of truth already on hand. Scientific advance is through guesses—more or less rash—destined often to ephemeral life, and marking only the approximations of the mind to sound and accurate learning. No department of science can make real progress without constant and searching criticism,

that zeal may not outrun knowledge, nor brilliant conjecture do duty as secure fact.

But when the matter of research is closely related to our sacred documents, where truth is most needful, and mistake most disastrous, then such criticism, both calm and intrepid, is demanded with especial emphasis. And it is from this standpoint that it ought to be profitable to survey the great subject of ASSYRIAN DISCOVERY. The remarks just made are fully applicable here. Assyriology has its guesses, and it has its accurate knowledge. It has felt the benefit of rigid critical examination at some points, and has suffered, at others, for lack of it. In some directions it has borne rich fruit for the Old Testament exegete, but has been allowed to do harm in others. I trust, therefore, that it may not be thought foreign to those great matters which are to occupy us through the coming months, if we con-

sider, for a little, some of the *Uses and Abuses of Assyriology in Old Testament Study*.

Assyriology is the somewhat inadequate term employed to denote the scientific investigation of the history, literature, and art of the Babylonians and Assyrians, as these have been revealed through excavation on the sites of their ancient cities. In all human research there have never been more surprising discoveries. The constitution and external fortunes of great peoples, their religion and morals, their languages and writings, even, to some degree, their personal habits and modes of life, have been suddenly disclosed. Centuries that were saved from utter blankness only by wild and conflicting stories from Greek historians have taken on precision and life and movement. Other centuries, wholly unknown before, have been rescued out of the abyss of the past.

A new, and vast, and varied canvas has been added to the panorama of history.

And it was perceived, at once, that this was not a matter for the secular historian alone. The peoples who thus emerged from the darkness were the very ones whose destinies intertwined themselves so fatally with those of the Hebrew nation. We had, all of us, heard their names from childhood; though we had little understood the involved machinery of national life which projected those devastating irruptions from the East, before which the northern and the southern kingdoms of Israel successively fell. It was therefore not strange, that, to the eager students of philology and history who hailed the new discoveries, and plunged with energy into the work of their elucidation, were added numbers of those to whom Apologetics seemed the most important field of human learning, and who, with a more or less

hasty equipment for the task, began at once to make Assyriology serviceable in defending the Scriptures. The consequence was the appropriation of valuable matter, often effective employment of it, great and infectious enthusiasm, but a sad lack of cool judgment and scholarly patience.

Before considering the great positive benefits which Biblical study has derived from the cuneiform records, I beg you to recall a few of the abuses which have crept into some of the work of those who have employed them to establish the truth of Scripture.

I. The root of the misuse of Assyriology in Bible study has been, as already hinted, an ill-directed and excessive Apologetics. Into the sources of this Apologetic spirit, it is not necessary to enter in detail. That the matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxon mind, tenacious of its traditions, re-

membering the religious struggles of other ages, and clinging to their hard-earned fruits, insisting with an energy which experience has intensified upon the indivisible connection of theory with practice—belief with life,—brought by its practical and aggressive conception of Christianity into frequent and prolonged hostilities with skepticism in many forms, accustomed to fight its own battles, and eager to pre-occupy the strategic points, should in our day be inclined to lay too much stress, relatively, upon warfare in defence of the truth, can hardly be a surprise to us. No thoughtful man can lightly esteem that branch of scientific theology which consists in a defence of fundamental, revealed truth from the attacks of its adversaries. An important place in theological study is with reason assigned to it. But it may be questioned, whether the Apologetic *temper*, always on the defensive, always looking

for assaults, and prepared, at the first blow, to strike vigorously back—is a healthy frame of mind for a Christian thinker. It accustoms him to a timorous view of truth. It is likely to issue in a narrow zeal, which will oppose every new thing, through fear that it may, in some way, imperil the old. It tends to prevent the taking up of new and genuine elements into the sum of truth, the modifying of statements to make them harmonize with advancing knowledge. There is danger, that in protecting the inherited treasures of the past, it will hinder the accumulation of more; that in securing the achievements of bygone centuries, it will fetter the present with their limitations. An Apologetics of this sort runs the risk of crippling itself, by insisting upon the use of old methods and weapons against modern and well-equipped opponents. It is likely to grow eager for certain *forms*

of truth, rather than for essential *truth*. It inclines to make no distinction between eternal verities and the forms of revelation in which those verities are embodied, and to venture the whole substance of the former upon its apprehension of the latter.

Such characteristics have been often perceptible in the discussions of recent years over matters of Biblical Criticism and Dogmatics, over points of historical, and natural, and philosophical science. But the field of what may be called Archæological Apologetics affords some special opportunities for observing them, because the discoveries in this field have been so generally presented to the world as being, what they really are on the whole, most favorable to the interests which Apologetics defends. Archæology has not assailed fundamental truth, as natural science has sometimes been foolishly made to do.

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The Apologetic temper in relation to Archæology may therefore be observed, so to speak, in its natural movement, not provoked and forced into a violent position, by attack, but acting spontaneously, in accordance with the tendencies which have become habitual with it, and under their guidance using the materials which excavation and research have put into its hand.

It is amid these circumstances that those abuses have sprung up, in the employment of Assyriology for Bible study, especially in popular treatments of the subject, which we ought to deprecate and try to abolish.

(1.) One abuse of Assyriology for purposes of Old Testament study is *overhaste in its employment*. By this I do not mean to imply any doubt as to the solid basis of knowledge upon which the published decipherments of the cuneiform inscriptions

rest. But it took a long time to establish that basis. And although the general values of the characters rest upon the cumulative evidence of many decades, and the growing experience of the decipherer and translator is constantly giving him greater ease in his processes, and more entire confidence in his results, it is impossible to do anything hastily that will be of lasting value. At the best, first results are provisional. Early translations are approximate only. Some detail, at first unperceived or misunderstood, may change the scope of a whole inscription. And, more than this, to see the newly discovered facts in their right relations—to perceive their meaning when combined with other facts, and to work them all together into one compact, enduring structure, is not a matter for the first day or first week. The Assyriologists themselves have been guilty of many sins of excessive haste, in the in-

toxication of discovery. But although their science has suffered thereby in the eyes of other scholars, and a considerable number of soundly trained philologists and historians has been held aloof, still, as far as Assyriology itself is concerned, it will outlive these errors. Its votaries will learn caution, as the excitement of exploration cools, and their number increases. The chief harm has been done to Bible students who have caught at their dicta. The Assyriologists themselves have, of course, been primarily at fault; but the Biblical scholar cannot shake off his own responsibility. He has not only, to his undoing, taken the hasty conclusions of the specialists, and worked them into his expositions, but he has himself drawn hasty conclusions from them. It is curious to see how the same excess of the Apologetic spirit makes its possessor at one time too conservative, and at another

too radical—now over-cautious, and now rash. Over against carefully generalized propositions of natural science, accepted by great bodies of scientific workers, and affording fair explanations of classes of facts, we have seen a tolerably unyielding front; over against well-ascertained results of the literary criticism of the Bible we have seen a mental stolidity which argument could not affect; but for theories and suggestions from Assyriology, often not half so well supported or understood, there has been, in some quarters, an unseemly voracity; everything has been swallowed; the simplest rules of critical inquiry have been forgotten. There has been blind trusting to authority, without weighing it, and an assumption of fact upon the mere say-so of some presumably honest scholar. A mean between these extremes, more openness of mind to scientific proof, and less greedy snatching at

everything which seems to offer a plausible argument for what we believe would give truth a better chance.

The unfortunate results of too great precipitation in this matter can be readily illustrated:

E.g.: Between nine and ten years ago, one of the foremost Assyriologists (no longer living) wrote to the editor of an English newspaper the announcement that he had found what he thought would be, "to the general public, the most interesting and remarkable cuneiform tablet yet discovered. This turns out to contain," he says, "the story of man's original innocence, of the temptation, and of the fall."¹ This announcement he repeated and amplified in a book published not long after,²

¹ George Smith: Letter printed in the Daily Telegraph, March 4, 1875.

² George Smith: *Chaldean Account of Genesis*, pp. 11, 13 sq., 81 sq. London, 1875; New York, 1876.

—of course the statement was echoed and re-echoed; after the discovery of the Babylonian Deluge and Creation tablets nothing could be too great a surprise. Everybody felt that the third chapter of Genesis had received powerful support. Many persons did not make it clear to themselves what the precise kind and degree of that support was, but we need not enter upon that inquiry just now. The important thing is that it was not long before other decipherers were able to show conclusively that this first, hasty translation of the newly found inscription was mistaken,¹ and the chief evidence for a Babylonian story of the Fall was thus destroyed. But the use of his translation in discussions about Genesis did not at once

¹ Friedr. Delitzsch, in George Smith's *Chaldäische Genesis*, pp. 301 sq. Leipzig, 1876. George Smith: *Chaldean Account of Genesis*, rev. edition, by Sayce, p. vii., etc., etc. London and New York, 1880.

cease.¹ And even where it has been given up, some of his corroborative proofs have been made to support the thesis that the Babylonians had such a story, though we have not as yet discovered it. This is not impossible, nor even improbable, but there is a wide difference between expecting a discovery and making one, and then building on what you have made.

Another illustration is found in theories about the garden of Eden. The notion that Assyriology proves that the Babylonians had a legend of Eden, and located it somewhere in their own territory, has cropped out at various times within the past decade or two.² It has been caught at eagerly by those who were troubled

¹ *E.g.*, C. Geikie: *Hours with the Bible*, i., p. 122. New York, 1881.

² *E.g.*, Sir H. Rawlinson: *Journ. Royal Asiatic Society*, 1869. Annual Report. Friedrich Delitzsch: *Wo lag das Paradies*. Leipzig, 1881.

about the exact geographical interpretation of Gen. ii., and in its most recent form appeared to some of them to satisfy even in its details the requirements of the Biblical narrative. And yet, wherever this theory has been submitted to thorough tests, its lack of sure foundation has become evident.¹

The attempt has been likewise made to confirm theories of the Sabbath, by reference to a similar institution among the Babylonians,² but the result has been to make it appear that, with our present knowledge, little intrinsic resemblance, and no historical relationship can be safely asserted as beyond question.³

The question of the antiquity of the Babylonian civilization is another instance

¹ See Old Testament Student, September, 1884.

² See, especially, James Johnston: Catholic Presbyterian, January, 1881.

³ See Presbyterian Review, October, 1882. W. Lotz (Quaest. Sabbat., Leipzig, 1882) is more confident.

in point. A very distinguished historian¹ has been at the pains to prove that the earliest Babylonian civilization did not date beyond B.C. 2300, or, at the farthest, 2500. This seemed, until recently, likely enough, though his argument was not demonstrative; but within a year or two almost all the Assyriologists have adopted as trustworthy the statement of a Babylonian tablet that one of the early Shemitic kings was reigning there about B.C. 3800, and place the Akkadian civilization still earlier, taking up, on a new ground, the view that Bunsen² published, in the last generation.

The Assyriologists, it must be admitted, have rather a slender basis for their date, since the tablet referring to this ancient

¹ G. Rawlinson : *Origin of Nations*, Chap. III. London, 1877 ; New York, 1881.

² *Egypt's Place in Universal History*, iii., pp. 361, 451, etc. London, 1859.

king was inscribed in the sixth century, but its discovery hints too strongly at the likelihood of further evidence looking the same way, to be comfortable for those committed to the other view.

Now the blameworthy thing in all this is not the mistakes. The most careful scholar may make mistakes, of fact and of inference. But the blameworthy thing is that there has been no adequate care to guard against mistakes. Assyriology would be a more useful aid to exegesis to-day if the energy that has been spent in glorifying it, on the ground of its real or supposed contributions to our knowledge, had been devoted to a patient inquiry into the real value and bearing of these contributions. There has been too much going on the theory that every assertion which seemed to confirm the Old Testament was therefore, as a matter of course, a true statement, and any ques-

tioning of it a covert attack upon the Old Testament.

The result of such a habit, pushed to its logical issue, could not be doubtful. There would be not only the wasted labor of erecting worthless defences, but there would be the necessity of abandoning those defences whenever the attack should come, with all the loss of moral force due to a constant shifting of position. True, we may expect to learn, and ought to wish to learn. The defence of to-day ought not to be the same line of fortifications that served the last generation. But a constant, and enforced shifting of ground, made needful not because the fortifications are antiquated, but because though new they are not shot-proof, is, to say the least, undignified for champions of divine truth, and is demoralizing to the rank and file. There is no need of such a hand-to-mouth Apologetics. There

is no exigency which requires this catching at any and every weapon. We want well-considered results that have some prospect of permanence.

It ought to be clearly understood by every man who takes it upon himself to speak or write in behalf of the Bible that there is no possibility of reaching assured conclusions except by calm, patient, candid, prolonged and critical examination of all the facts. It is not always that one man can go through the whole process; in the case of busy ministers it is rarely possible. But there must be some kind of sufficient assurance that the process has been carried through, by some one competent to do it. When the same man is Assyriologist and exegete, he ought, as exegete, to demand of himself, as Assyriologist, the most rigid observance of the rules of critical investigation. Conclusions must not be jumped at, but reached

from weighing of evidence. He may, as Assyriologist, have his hypotheses; science advances by setting up hypotheses, and working from them, till they are displaced by better. But then he must not, as exegete, treat the hypothesis as an established fact, and build a dogmatic exposition upon it.

Exegetes and apologists who are not themselves at home in the inscriptions ought to demand of the special investigators that they give them nothing as assured result which has not been thoroughly tested and sifted. They ought to demand that fact be sharply distinguished from guess; that definite and intelligible reasons be assigned for opinions. They ought to distrust popular and cursory statements of surprising discoveries. They ought to learn something of the character and way of reasoning of those to whom they look as authorities, in order to have

a notion of the probable worth of their opinions. In short, they ought to make it a matter of conscience to take each step with as clear reason as their most earnest efforts, under the conditions and with the equipment which their circumstances furnish, can possibly secure. It will be a good day for Old Testament studies when this comes to be the prevailing habit among Old Testament students.

(2.) Another abuse of Assyriology for purposes of Old Testament study, and one so flagrant as not to need long discussion, is *the refusal to accept its clear facts*, in the interest of some theory of interpretation. We need to discriminate here. When an Assyrian statement can be equally well explained in two different ways, we have the right, and are bound, as we should be in all historical study, to take that explanation which harmonizes with a corresponding Biblical statement. It may even

be scientifically allowable to modify an Assyrian statement for sufficient cause. Thus when Sennacherib recounts the successes of his great Palestinian campaign, and puts the tribute of Hezekiah at the end, instead of near the beginning, reversing the order of 2 Kings xviii., we can see a reason for that, which confirms the accuracy of the latter. For it is most natural that the Assyrian king should have been desirous of putting the best face on his disappointing expedition by rounding off his account with a description of his spoils; while it is hardly credible that, after Jerusalem had successfully defied his threats, Hezekiah should have paid him tribute. So, also, it is not a warping of Assyriological facts to supplement and explain them by Bible facts, which the inscriptions ignore. Sennacherib does not tell us why he suddenly returned to Nineveh, while apparently, from

his own account, in the full tide of military success. A historian with no predilection in favor of the Bible, called to choose between the mice-eaten quivers and bows, which Herodotus gossips about, and the providentially ordered pestilence of the book of Kings, might well prefer the latter.

But when the sense of the inscription is distinct and complete, then it is not legitimate to put another sense into it for harmonistic purposes. You may deny its truth, if you choose to take the responsibility of that, but you have no right to warp its meaning. A noteworthy illustration of what I mean is the hypothesis of a break in the Eponym Canon. I hope I shall not be thought too technical in explaining it. The Eponym Canon is a list of officials, who, after the fashion of Greek archons and Roman consuls, gave names to the successive years. A complete list of this sort would give us a secure chrono-

logical basis for Assyrian history. In fact, we have no one complete list, but six or seven partial lists, overlapping each other, so as to cover altogether a period of two hundred and fifty years, from the beginning of the ninth to the middle of the seventh century B.C. There is no internal proof, and no indication from all the cuneiform literature that the succession of names thus given is not continuous ; no suggestion of a break. And yet a respectable number of chronologists have assumed a break of forty-six years, to make a place in this interval for the king Pul, of 2 Kings xv. and 1 Chr. v., whose name did not appear in the inscriptions. They have done this in spite of the fact that the eponym chronology is fixed on one side of their break by agreement with the list of Babylonian kings which Claudius Ptolemy, near the beginning of our era, made up in Greek, on Babylonian authority, and fixed on the

other by an eclipse of the sun in B.C. 763 (they have taken advantage of a less noteworthy eclipse in B.C. 809); they have acted in the face of the convincing historical proof that Pul was identical with Tiglathpileser (II.), solely on the ground that Tiglathpileser cannot, according to their understanding of Biblical dates, have been a contemporary of Menahem of Israel, with whose name Pul's is associated, 2 Kings xv. 19. This view is gradually losing its adherents, but has been maintained by reputable scholars.¹ The vice of this method of handling the inscriptions lies here: that it involves a playing fast-and-loose with well-attested historical documents; hailing them eagerly when they say at once what you want them to say, but

¹ Particularly in France; see J. Oppert: *Salomon et ses Successeurs*, Paris, 1877; E. Ledrain: *Histoire d'Israel*, 2 vols., Paris, 1879-82. The quietus has probably been given to this hypothesis by recent discovery. See below.

discrediting them with all your might when their utterances are troublesome to you ; it means that you are unwilling to wait, unable to hold questions of harmony in abeyance, insist on building your own wall, and building at once, and building on your own foundation ; not courageous enough to be candid ; not large-minded enough to recognize a well-established fact outside of the Bible as possessed of all the rights of a fact, and claiming its lawful place in the complete series of facts. The danger in this particular case is, I think, practically overcome, but the same inclinations are still alive. They spring from an affection for God's Word which is not to be lightly esteemed, and a purpose to defend it at all hazards, which does honor to him that cherishes it, but they endanger the interests for which they fight, because they are tinged by fear of the full light of all the truth. It is a great pity to be afraid of facts.

(3.) This brings us to another point. It is an abuse of Assyriology for purposes of Old Testament study *to ignore the new problems* with which it confronts the Biblical scholar. Assyriology is not a mere key to unlock doors. It offers a vast and complicated series of facts. It throws clear light on some things, and partial light on others, and reveals dim outlines of yet others. If we put ourselves in that light, we must be willing to see all it shows us. Assyriology is not simply an interpreter, that stands outside and explains our Bibles to us. It makes its way into our Bibles, and even while it smooths over some of the old difficulties, it sometimes unearths new ones no less troublesome. It is the imperative duty of those who study—most of all those who teach, or expect to teach—the Bible, to recognize these new problems in all their gravity and far-reaching import. Intelligence and

honesty, love for the Scriptures and loyalty to truth, all demand it. The new questions must be faced without prejudice and discussed without passion. I do not mean that they must at once and indiscriminately be made topics for popular discourse; though I believe we ought to be looking forward to a time, and preparing for it, when the average membership of our churches shall have a faith so full of living nerves and muscles that it will hold itself upright beneath even such searching inquiries as these; and wise instruction is very nourishing to such a faith; still, a habitual and emphatic magnifying of these problems is needless and would do harm, as much as the ignoring of them. But whoever undertakes to make use of Assyriology in behalf of the Old Testament cannot shun them, for himself, and there will be many cases which will prove the wisdom of keeping the bright and eager

and truthful minds that come under his influence fairly well informed of the obscure matters as well as of the plain ones. It gives the enemy a great advantage if he can be the one to drop an ugly-looking fact, colored as he can color it, into the mind of one whom you are set to teach ; so that the pupil will suppose you did not know it, and despise you, or concealed it, and distrust you. Of course the right presentation of difficulties is a matter for very delicate treatment, but it can be learned. The first and chief thing is that we apprehend ourselves what the difficulties are.

The so-called Genesis tablets, already referred to, furnish an illustration. Take, for example the Deluge tablet,¹ with its divine command to build the ship, its account of the embarkation, its picture of the oncoming and the effects of the flood,

¹See Lenormant: *Beginnings of History*, English Translation, pp. 575 sq. New York, 1882.

the ship grounding at length on a mountain, the sending out of dove and raven, the sacrifice after disembarking, and all the details of its correspondence with the Hebrew account. There are disagreements, no doubt, but the resemblances are sufficiently striking. How are these resemblances to be explained? Is there a literary relationship between the two? If so, of what sort? Which depends on the other; or are both dependent upon some earlier form of the story? If so, again, which of the two comes the nearer to that earlier form? And what was the character of that earlier form? If, as now seems most likely, the Ur Kasdim from which Abram came out was in Babylonia, does this give any clue to the presence of the story among the Hebrews? And when did Abram come out? Can it be proved that the story was current in Babylonia before he left that land? Where

did it come into being, and how? Did it originate with the *Shemitic* Babylonians, or was it borrowed by them from the Akkadians, those imperfectly known parents of so large a part of the Shemitic civilization? What light is thrown by these inquiries upon the catastrophe which the narrative describes—its nature, its extent, its result?

It will be seen that such inquiries as these are not questions of abstract science, but have to do with the structure of the first of our sacred books, the sources of its materials, and, not indeed the fact of its inspiration—that is not touched—but the mode of that inspiration's working. They open up, for example, the whole discussion, whether the early narratives of Genesis are matter of special revelation to their immediate human author; whether they have been handed down from remotest antiquity under a miraculous super-

vision, which kept them free from admixture of error; whether they belong to the common stock of popular, Shemitic tradition, cleansed and ennobled and made fit vehicles for spiritual teaching, under the special influence of God; or what other explanation of their present appearance and form may suggest itself. For a like set of questions can be put with reference to the Creation tablets of Babylonia, as far as they agree in form with Gen. i. and ii., and if there were a Babylonian story of the Fall, we should have the same problems, in some respects more intricate, the closer the external resemblance with the Hebrew narratives. Dogmatism might cut the knot, but our duty as Christian scholars is to untie it, if we can, and, at all events, in the interests of God's truth to recognize it, and weave no theory in whose meshes that knot shall be merely hidden, put out of sight, and forgotten.

The divine origin of the Bible, the more strongly it is believed, will impel us the more forcibly to a complete apprehension of all the facts which have to do with it, and to a more persistent assurance that the Bible will not suffer, but will gain, indefinitely and permanently, in the appreciation and faith of men, the more freely these reverent questions are raised, and the more thoroughly they are settled.

Take a different illustration. An ancient cuneiform record bears a story—call it legend or history, as you please—of the King Sargon of Agane; how he was born in retirement, placed by his mother in a basket of rushes, launched on a river, rescued and brought up by a stranger; after which he became king.¹ Is there any connection between this story and

¹ See G. Smith, *Trans. Soc. Bib. Archæol.*, i., p. 46. 1872. Cf. *Chaldean Account of Genesis*, p. 224. 1876. Rev. ed., p. 319 sq. 1880.

that of Moses? If so, what? It has been said that the stories of the exposure of Romulus and Cyrus and other unfortunate infants were later reflections—echoes—of the Hebrew account of Moses. Whether that was likely or not, here we have a king who lived a thousand years before Moses—perhaps much more. It is believed that the story was told of him several hundred years at least before Moses was born. Is there simply a coincidence here? I do not doubt for a moment that there is some explanation, honorable to the Sacred Record and satisfactory to the literary phenomena, but what is it? The best that one of the most popular and conservative of recent writers on such topics can say is: “Acting either on the hint of this strange legend, or led in a like case to a similar course, Jochebed prepared a little ark of papyrus,” etc.¹

¹ C. Geikie: *Hours with the Bible*, ii., p. 92. New York, 1881.

The former hypothesis is conceivable, but unlikely; the latter, again possible, but very strange. The problem is still there.

As a third illustration, take the newest Cyrus Inscriptions. There are two of them,¹ which give the account from different stand-points (that of the zealous priest and that of the annalist) of the capture of Babylon by Cyrus' troops, B.C. 538. I mention only one of the points of difficulty which arise when these inscriptions are compared with statements in the book of Daniel. They seem to leave no place for "Darius the Median." Gobryas, general of Cyrus' forces, entered Babylon, according to their statement, in July, of the seventeenth year of Nabonidus, the reigning King of Babylon. Cyrus fol-

¹ A cylinder (see Sir H. Rawlinson, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, January, 1880), and a tablet (see Theoph. G. Pinches, *Transactions of Soc. of Bibl. Archæol.*, vii., 1. 1880.)

lowed him soon after; having at once deposed Nabonidus, and assumed the royal power. The Darius who from Dan. v. 31, vi. 1-28, etc., would appear to have followed the last Babylonian king, and preceded Cyrus, seems not to exist for the inscriptions. Now here is a historical problem of the first order. It needs no amplification. The issue is clear. I do not know what adequate solution can be now offered for the difficulty. That there is some solution, under which the Bible will suffer no damage, I feel sure, but who can now tell us what it is? ¹ This is a specimen of a comparatively small, but extremely grave class of problems, which it is not honest, nor wise, for Bible students to put wholly out of sight, when they call Assyriology to their aid in interpreting the Scriptures.

¹ A current answer affirms the legendary character of the book of Daniel. But this is not enough. The origin of the legend is still to be explained.

No one of these questions endangers the divine truth. That has its own basis, immovable and sure. And no one of them need endanger our repose upon the divine truth, or give us anxiety or distress of mind. Peace of heart, security for the truth and in the truth, belong, in God's ordering, to the courageous, reverent, and loyal inquirer, who welcomes all knowledge that God sends him.

II. It might seem wise in me to detain you a much shorter time with the *uses* of Assyriology in Old Testament study, not because this branch of the subject is less important than the other, but because it is, at least in the general aspects of it, more familiar. And yet I trust that some fulness of illustration may not come amiss. For, if the cautions already suggested are kept in mind, we are not likely to exaggerate the advantages which As-

syriology offers to the student of the Bible. They are very great.

(1.) In the first place, Assyriology has given to the ancient Hebrew literature and life a *new setting*. Whenever we learn to know a people in its racial connections, then we are beginning to *know* it, then it begins to take its rightful place among the peoples of the earth, then the fibres of human sympathy begin to reach out on this side and that, there are points of contact, there are lines of interest; we can estimate its whole character more wisely when we learn, even imperfectly, its genesis and its relationships; what it has accomplished in the world takes on a new aspect, either by resemblance or by contrast, when put by the side of the doings of its sister people; the forms of its thought become more intelligible, or more striking; the quality of its literature receives some

explanation, and the external features of that literature cease to be solitary and strange to us; the people and all that belongs to it come more fully into our world, and range themselves alongside of us and our neighbors and our ancestors, and take on a familiarity which is yet new and fresh, and full of meaning. It is a distinct and great advantage, when, without any lowering of its unique claims, or any diminution of the special characteristics imparted to it by the divine agency in its production, the volume of sacred writings, before whose authority we bow, associates itself more intimately, on its human side, with the history of mankind at large.

Nothing has done so much to establish these connections as the inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria. It is true we have had other Shemitic literatures—Arabic, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Rabbinic—

but all of them too late, and much of their product too artificial to illumine the ancient Hebrew times with the living light, to throw about them the brilliant atmosphere, which records contemporary with them could do. But within the last thirty years there has been coming more and more plainly into view the background from which the Old Testament stands out in a definition of increasing sharpness, and yet with such gradations of light and shade, such lines running from the foreground back into the recesses of the picture, as to give unity to the whole, and convince us that foreground and background, in a subtle way, belong together. We begin to perceive what the Shemitic race was, in its power and its weakness, its early vigor and its enduring tenacity, its versatility and its depth, its religious fervor and its practical coolness and shrewdness, its capacity

for poetic emotion and its literary skill, its creative attempts at realistic and symbolic art, and its daring plans for architectural triumphs; on the other hand, its cruel and selfish warrings, its pitiless oppressions, its internecine strifes, its arbitrary despotisms, its extravagance and vanity, and its foul idolatries; we find the germs of impulses and movements that worked ruin to the Hebrews, at the last, through the hand of their own kindred peoples, and we find new cause to wonder at the divine power which could yet make of Israel a chosen nation. This in general, and many details beside. The very Genesis tablets, which raise such hard questions, by their form and by their subject-matter testify of a close and vital union, in some tap-root, of the civilization of the Jordan with that of the Euphrates; the hundred mutual explanations of annals and chronicles, from the banks

of the Tigris and from the hill that overlooks the valley of Kedron knit the Hebrew history into the world's history, and convince us that in our Old Testaments we have to do with men, with human passions and schemes and hopes and struggles, inward and outward.

This is not a matter of slight consequence—a mere *dilettante* interest. It may serve not only to increase our own care for the Old Testament, by making it vivid, not only to diminish to some degree that unhappy racial prejudice, which in late years has been reviving in different parts of the world—not unprovoked in particular cases, but utterly unworthy of those who, by God's grace, through faith have become children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise—but also to bridge over that chasm, which sometimes seems hopelessly widening, between all that relates to Bible truth and the im-

mense energies put forth by men of taste and of scientific habit, in the pursuit of those branches of human knowledge to which their inclinations lead them. It is a vast gain when a great system of facts that belongs inseparably to our religion, so thrusts itself in the path of explorers who do not care for our religion, that they cannot ignore them or sport with them, but are forced to regard them as one of the serious elements in the history and life of men.

(2.) Another way in which Assyriology is of use to the Old-Testament student is this: it brings into clear light the *essential difference* between the Hebrews and other ancient peoples. To lay more stress on formal agreement than on essential difference might have been named among the abuses of Assyriology; but Assyriology itself, to the clear-eyed Christian scholar, works directly against this abuse.

Whether there are agreements or disagreements in form between old Hebrew and old Babylonian documents, and what these agreements or disagreements signify, is a deeply interesting inquiry. But it is, after all, of secondary consequence. It is a great mistake to stop with these external relationships. The thing which every earnest Bible scholar is most concerned for is that root-element which *distinguishes* the Hebrew people from all other ancient peoples, and the Hebrew writings from all other ancient literatures. The one great distinctive feature of the literary monuments of the Hebrews is that they were informed by a spirit to which the inscriptions of Nineveh and Babylon are utter strangers. There is a truth of spiritual conception, a loftiness of spiritual tone, a conviction of unseen realities, a confident reliance upon an invisible but all-controlling power, a humble worship in the pres-

ence of the supreme majesty, a peace in union and communion with the one and only God, and the vigorous germs of an ethics reflecting his will, which make an infinite gap between the Hebrew and his brother Shemite "beyond the river," that all likeness of literary form does not begin to span. I do not mean to contradict what I have already implied, and deny that there was genuine religious feeling in the valleys of the great Asiatic rivers. In Babylonia, at least, we know that there were unquenched desires of the spirit, bitter consciousness of sin, and longing for its forgiveness, humble prostration before the unseen Deity, vague conceptions of his righteous demands, and longings for alliance with him, on the part of those who painfully exercised their souls—"if haply they might feel after him and find him." Nor do I doubt that those desires and vague gropings of the mind were truly heaven-

sent. But they were exceptional, and they were sadly ineffective. Go back once more to the poems of creation, as the cuneiform tablet and the first chapter of Genesis present them ; there are formal resemblances, but these cannot offset, for a moment, the fundamental difference. Compare the polytheism of the Babylonian myth, its inarticulate pantheism, its confounding of the gods with the world, its emanation—all things, gods included, born from the womb of Chaos—with the distinct, unhesitating, unobscured monotheism of Genesis, struck out sharply and unmistakably in the first majestic line, "In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth." Men say, Oh, of course, the Hebrews had a purer conception of God. But the point is that this is the essential matter ; this is what we care about. No doubt it has been recognized and emphasized before, but we have never

before had the opportunity of seeing so plainly what it would be to have this commanding and determining element left out—from even one page—of the Old Testament.

The formal, external resemblance—even the correspondence in subject-matter—make this vital distinction so obvious as to insist on recognition. And I am persuaded that, at least as far as the early narratives of Genesis are concerned, Christian scholars will come more and more to the position that it is not the features of likeness to the Genesis tablets of Babylonia that support the unique character of the Bible so much as the absolute and appalling *unlikeness* in the spiritual conceptions and temper by which they are infused.

(3.) But, in thinking of the uses of Assyriology in Old Testament study, our minds turn most readily, no doubt, to the

positive historical confirmations and explanations which have been awakened by the blow of the excavator's pick, and risen up before us out of the ground. And in this aspect of it Assyriology is a mine of wealth. It proves, speaking broadly, and leaving out of account for the time the occasional difficulties which it presents, that among the nations of antiquity, whose literary remains have come down to us, the Hebrews were the only outsiders who really knew much about the great Asiatic empires. The stamp of honesty and competency is thus put upon their historical documents, if they needed it. The Egyptians were too far away, and came too seldom into any relations with Babylon and Nineveh, to be of first-rate value as witnesses to their deeds. The Greeks told fairy-tales that entertained their readers, but were largely untrue. The Hebrews, with their nearer



position, and more frequent and memorable contact, had also a conscientiousness and skill in annalistic writing which make their evidence in regard to the history of their neighbors important and trustworthy, though, of course, disconnected. The inscriptions which show us this, give us thereby a new ground of confidence in Hebrew history as a whole.

It is here impossible to give even the barest enumeration of the Biblical incidents and events to which Assyriology bears its testimony. They begin very early in the sacred volume. Passing out of the realm of the legendary "Genesis tablets," we know—or think we know; it is in the highest degree probable, if not yet demonstrated—where Abraham's Ur Kasdim stood, and dig up bricks there that must have been inscribed before ever Terah had a son. It was the fashion among a certain school of critics, not very

many years ago, to prove, and prove again, the unhistorical character of Gen. xiv.—the Elamite campaign into Canaan.¹ Wise exegetes are not doing this now. There is too much light out of the East. The sun has risen too high. Ahab and Jehu, and the league of Syrian kings against Shalmaneser II., Tiglath-pileser and Ahaz against Pekah and Rezin, these combinations are familiar now to Bible-readers. The Sargon whose name was preserved to us only in a single verse of Isaiah (xx. 1) has grown into a figure that almost fills the stage of Western Asia for sixteen eventful years; Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, Nebuchadnezzar and Evil Merodach, Cyrus and the great Darius Hystaspis, and many kings beside—the wedge-shaped characters tell us of them all. A selection from the great

¹ *E.g.*, Nöldeke: *Untersuchungen zur Kritik des Alten Testaments*, 1869.

mass of materials at hand may serve to recall to your minds some characteristics of this new testimony which make it indispensable to the student of Biblical history. It will be more profitable to confine ourselves to those cuneiform records which give explanations of obscure points in the Old-Testament narratives, rather than to devote any part of our limited time to the more simple and obvious confirmations.

Look, then, for the first illustration, at the period when Ahab was involved in hostilities with Benhadad II. of Damascus (1 Kings xx., xxii.). This Benhadad was son (xx. 34) of a monarch of the same name who, at the call of Asa of Judah, had wantonly broken the peace existing between Baasha of Israel and himself, seized upon cities of the northern kingdom, and held them by no other title than that of might (ch. xv.). The son, not contented with the

possession of that which his father had secured, marched against Samaria with a large force, and made the most insulting and humiliating demands. In the battle that ensued he was defeated, but himself escaped. The following year he returned, was again defeated, and this time came into the power of Ahab. The latter, however, instead of visiting upon the head of the captive the injuries and insults Israel had received from him and his house, welcomed him as a brother, and dismissed him on the easy terms of a restoration of the cities taken by his father, and the freedom of the city of Damascus for himself (ch. xx.). We can understand perfectly well how the prophet, for whom Benhadad was an enemy of God as well as of Israel, should have been indignant at this motiveless clemency (vv. 35 sq.). But the difficult thing is to understand how Ahab could have been willing to exercise it, and how it

came about that he was able to secure an acquiescence of his army in it. The explanations which used to be attempted ignored the latter point, and met the former lamely enough. To attribute this neglect of a capital opportunity for revenge, and for a vast extension of his own power to Ahab's good nature, and to his "joy at knowing that a crowned head, of equal rank with himself, is still living,"¹ assumes in Ahab such idealistic views of life that it might have been difficult for Elijah and Naboth and Mesha, King of Moab, to appreciate this theory. If any one should cite v. 31 ("we have heard that the kings of Israel *are* merciful kings") in confirmation of this view, he would need to be reminded that these words are put into the mouth of the servants of Benhadad at a critical emergency,

¹Thenius: Die Bücher der Könige, 2d ed., p. 243. Leipzig, 1873.

when everything depended on saving their master from despair, and not truth, but immediate and decisive effect would be their chief aim ; and besides this, that if the words really correspond to the facts, then they must apply not only to Ahab, but also to Omri and Zimri and Elah and Baasha and the rest, which makes rather a severe strain upon our credulity. The explanation of Ewald¹ is little better, viz., that Ahab was flattered by the humble entreaty of his vanquished rival. Such a view would lead us to ask whether it would be likely that a ruler who could so easily be carried away by vanity as utterly to disregard his own interests, forget old scores, and cast away prudent forethought—even if he might be conceived as restraining his desire of conquest—whether it would be likely that such a ruler would

¹ History of Israel, Eng. Trans., vol. iv., p. 73. London, 1871.

maintain himself on the throne, amid all the turbulence and the scheming of the time, for twenty-two years, as Ahab did. This suggests again the difficulty of making the army calmly acquiesce in such leniency. The army would be full of irritation and of eagerness to reap the fruits of victory. The government was a military despotism, in which the soldier might raise his hand against the despot. It was because the army supported him that Omri had gained the throne (ch. xvi. 16 sq.). It was the army that afterward enabled Jehu to carry out his usurpation (2 Kings ix. 13 sq.), just as it was doubtless the army of the southern kingdom that brought about the death of Amaziah of Judah, and the establishment of Azariah in his stead (2 Kings xvi. 19 sq.). The army was a factor that must be reckoned with, and Ahab's army was not

likely to be gentle because Ahab was flattered or was amiably disposed.

Further, to crown the whole, we find, some three years later, that Benhadad had not given up the important city of Ramoth Gilead, and that Ahab expressly, and of his own motion, invited Jehoshaphat of Judah to make with him the campaign against Aram that cost the Israelitish king his life, and all to secure what the most crude diplomacy might have gained three years before.

The inscriptions of Shalmaneser II. of Assyria give us a key to the riddle. This king reigned B.C. 860-825, and came more than once into contact with the peoples west of the Euphrates. "In the eponymate of Dayan Asshur," he tells us, he crossed the Euphrates and attacked and conquered, at Karkar, an army under Benhadad and his allies; among the latter was "Ahab of Israel."¹ Now Dayan Asshur was epo-

¹ See *Records of the Past*, vol. iii., pp. 98, 99.

nym, B.C. 854. In that year, then, Ahab was in league with Benhadad. But we may infer from another inscription of Shalmaneser II., that Ahab met his death not later than B.C. 853. For he was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who reigned two years (xxii. 51), and he, by his brother Jehoram, who reigned twelve years (2 Ki. iii. 1), after which he was murdered by Jehu (2 Ki. ix. 24). Now Shalmaneser reports that he received tribute from Jehu, B.C. 842. Jehoram must therefore have been dead in 842, and what with his twelve years, and Ahaziah's two, even allowing for partial years reckoned as whole ones (cf. 1 Ki. xx. 51, with 2 Ki. iii. 1), Ahaziah cannot have come to the throne later than B.C. 853. Taking this for the year of Ahab's death, the peace with Benhadad, which was three years earlier, of course preceded the victory of Shalmaneser at Karkar in 854. Thus we

have the following simple historical combination: the peoples of Aram and of Irsael had not merely themselves to think of; they were not left to settle their affairs alone. The power of Assyria had become an important element in their calculations. It must evidently have been threatening the West as early as 855 or 856. But Benhadad's territory lay nearer to Assyria than Ahab's did. Therefore two things followed: First, that however completely Ahab might have subdued Benhadad, the latter's dominion was not at the time a desirable piece of property; it was quite too much exposed. Secondly, that it was clearly for Ahab's interest to refrain from crippling Benhadad so thoroughly that he could not make a vigorous resistance to Shalmaneser. It seemed far better for Israel that the fighting with Assyria, if there was to be any, should be on Aramæan (Syrian) ground.

Therefore Ahab let Benhadad off on easy terms. The motive was one which would satisfy—not God's prophet, indeed, but—himself, and his soldiers, who knew the strength of Assyria, and would have no fancy for an Assyrian force in their land. When, after a year, or more, Shalmaneser actually came across the Euphrates, and Benhadad was forced to bear the brunt of the fight with him, Ahab of course could not refuse to send a contingent of men to his assistance. Other princes did the same. The battle at Karkar was lost, and the league naturally fell apart. The next year, Ahab, with no friendly feelings toward Benhadad, who, in addition to previous insults and injuries, had led the allied forces to defeat, took advantage of a respite from Assyrian menaces, and of the probability that the unfortunate campaign of 854 would have weakened Benhadad and lost

him other allies, and joined with the King of Judah to make his fatal expedition against Ramoth-gilead. This is a rational, and probable, reconstruction of the story of those years, in the light of cuneiform decipherment. It does not appear that the author of the Books of Kings took account of all this; perhaps he did not know it all. It is, of course, not our object to prove the omniscience of a writer, but only to show what an explanation of obscure points in his writing is afforded by the records of Assyria.

As a case of a different sort, let us look at the argument, already referred to,¹ for the identity of "Pul, the King of Assyria" with Tiglath Pileser II. (2 Kings xv. 19, 29; 1 Chron. v. 26). In the passages here referred to no intimation is given that the two names belong to one and the same person. Yet the proof

¹ See above, p. 27.

to this effect is conclusive. And here, again, I must ask pardon if I give too much of dry detail. The topic is very important, not only for the understanding of these brief notices, but for the whole subject of Old Testament chronology. The true state of the case appears, negatively, from the absence, in the unbroken line of Assyrian rulers, of the name Pul, as either predecessor, co-regent, or successor of Tiglath Pileser, or as an ally, a rival, or a tributary prince. It has been argued, positively, from the following considerations:

(a.) Menahem, King of Israel, is named by Tiglath Pileser II. in an inscription, as tributary to himself. Now we learn from 2 Kings xv. 19, that Menahem bought the favor of Pul by the gift of a thousand talents of silver, which, of course, was nothing more nor less than a tribute. The silence of Assyrian inscriptions of

this period about any Pul, gives the opportunity for supposing, with no great violence, that the King to whom the Bible declares Menahem to have been tributary was the same with the King whom the inscriptions name in a like connection. Those who invent a break in the Eponym Canon¹ put the Menahem of the Bible earlier than Tiglath Pileser II., in order to keep him contemporary with Pul; then they go further and invent another Menahem, unknown to the Bible, to pay tribute to Tiglath Pileser and thus satisfy the inscriptions. The weight of these two unsupported hypotheses is increased when we remember that it is the Biblical Menahem who is contemporary with Azariah, King of Judah, and that this Azariah, also, is mentioned in the inscriptions of Tiglath Pileser II.

(b.) But the decisive evidence comes

¹ See above, p. 26.

from another quarter. Eusebius¹ preserves some fragments of an historical work by one Alexander Polyhistor, in the course of which it is reported, on the authority of Berossus, a Babylonian priest of about the third century B.C., that a "King of the Chaldæans," reigning before Sennacherib, bore the name *Phulus*. "He," Eusebius adds, "is said to have invaded Judæa." Now, even if this were all, when we find Ptolemy, the astronomer and geographer, who lived in the second century A.D., giving, in his list of Babylonian kings, based upon ancient records, the names of *Chinziros* and *Póros* as kings of Babylon in the year B.C. 731, and remember how easily *r* and *l* interchange in the passage of words from language to language, we should not be disinclined to connect this *Póros* with the *Phulus* mentioned in Eusebius.

¹ Chron., I. 4.

But this is in Babylonia, not Assyria, you will say. True, and yet it happens that from the Assyrian inscriptions we know a good deal of what was going on in Babylonia at just this time. Tiglath Pileser II. was King of Assyria B.C. 745–727, but he takes pains to inform us that he extended his power over Babylonia as well; he marched thither more than once, and describes these campaigns at length; they were so successful that he even calls himself “King of Shumir and Akkad,” *i.e.*, Southern and Northern Babylonia; more than this, he records that there submitted to him, in this very year 731, a king of Babylonia, by the name of *Ukinzir*,—the name that precedes *Póros* in Ptolemy’s list. To complete the argument it must be added that Tiglath Pileser died in B.C. 727, and that the first year of *Póros*’ successor in Babylon is given in Ptolemy’s list as 726.

It was, therefore, a reasonable inference

which Professor Schrader¹ and others drew—that *Pôros* (= *Phulus* = *Pul*) is simply another name for Tiglath Pileser II. And if this was his name in Babylon, no scholar would doubt that it might be his name in Israel as well.

Such was the argument up to 1884, and I have taken pains to give it at some length, to show how it has anticipated the most recent decipherments,² which furnish a brilliant confirmation of it, and settle the whole question. Not only has a cuneiform list of Babylonian kings been discovered, running parallel in part with the list of Ptolemy, showing its accuracy, and, in particular, exhibiting the names of *Ukinzir* and *Pulu* as successive Babylonian kings, during the

¹ Keilinschriften u. d. Alte Testament, 2d ed., Giessen, 1883, pp. 224–227 sq. The argument is given more fully by the same author: Keilinschriften u. Geschichtsfor-schung, Giessen, 1878, pp. 422 sq.

² Theoph. G. Pinches, in Proceedings of Soc. of Bibl. Archæol., May, 1884.

years B.C. 732-727; but a Babylonian chronicle, dealing with this period, is found to substitute *Tiglath Pileser* for *Pulu*. Probably no one will again venture to say that they are not one and the same. It is probable that *Pul* was his private, Tiglath Pileser his royal name (he seems not to have been of royal birth); but however that may prove, the history of the discussion shows us once more the value of historic insight, and the danger of allowing over-anxiety for the truth to force its defenders into a position from which advancing knowledge may drive them any day.

For our intelligent reading of 2 Kings xv., this identification is a distinct gain. It does also involve, it is true, a modification of the received dates of the Books of Kings, according to which both Menahem and Azariah were dead before Tiglath Pileser came to the throne, in B.C. 745. But this, too, is a great gain. It helps us to

see that the dates are corrupt, and gives us certain fixed points which will aid in restoring them to something like accuracy. I do not intend, however, to burden you with more figures, and beg you now to pass on to our final group of illustrations.

We noticed, a little while ago,¹ that the new Cyrus inscriptions offer a troublesome problem to the defender of the historical accuracy of the book of Daniel, by ignoring "Darius the Median." But they give us, on the other hand, invaluable guidance in the interpretation of some other parts of the Old Testament. I refer now, in particular, to the edicts of Cyrus found in the Book of Ezra, and the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, which have to do with the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, from their exile in Babylon. It should be said, at once, that the two inscriptions with which we are here concerned, do not allude to the

¹ See above, p. 37.

Jews and their restoration. But the fact of the restoration no one can question. The inquiry would be as to the motive of Cyrus and the manner of his personal agency in bringing it about.

It used to be thought—and this was very natural—that Cyrus, a Persian, with the monotheism of Zarathustra in his heart, was showing especial favor to the monotheistic religion of the Jews. The proclamations recorded in Ezra i. 2–4 and vi. 3–5, were supposed to have marks of particular and lavish generosity on the part of a worshipper of the one Ahuramazda, toward the worshippers of the one Jehovah, whom he might easily regard as Ahuramazda under another name.¹ That the people were summoned to make contributions for the rebuilding of the temple (i. 4) was no more surprising than that the king's own

¹ See, *e.g.*, Stanley, *Hist. of Jewish Church*, vol. iii., p. 75, new ed., New York, 1884.

treasury should be drawn upon for the same purpose (vi. 4). It has even been held that the Hebrew monotheism itself received a powerful impulse from contact with that which, under Cyrus, pervaded the empire.¹

Such theories, however attractive, are not borne out by the new discoveries. For these bring us face to face with the fact that idolatrous worships were treated by Cyrus with like consideration. Not only do the inscriptions tell us that he repaired the shrine of Merodach, which Nabonidus, the deposed Babylonian king, had neglected, and that he restored to their places the "gods of Shumir and Akkad," *i.e.*, favored the local idolatries of the various parts of Babylonia; but we learn from them that, on receiving the tribute of all the conquered territories which had learned to recognize the su-

¹Id. Ib., p. 162 sq.

premacy of Babylon, he reinstated the gods of these several lands, and assigned to them "enduring seats." We see, therefore, that the graciousness toward the religion of a conquered people, and the liberal expenditure in its behalf illustrated in his treatment of the Jews, was not peculiar, but was part of a settled habit, according to which he treated the deities of subject peoples with respect, and even with honor.

We reach a similar result when we consider, in the light of recent decipherments, the remarkable expressions with regard to Jehovah which the sacred historian puts into Cyrus' mouth: "Jehovah, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem" (Ezra i. 2). As already hinted, a prevailing opinion has been, not that Cyrus gave up his own religion, but that he found

such an agreement between the Hebrew religion and his own, that the God of the Hebrews seemed to him in substance identical with his god. It has, then, been quite commonly held that the name "Jehovah" was not used by him in the original proclamation, of which Ezra i. 2-4 is a rescript, but that the sentiment toward Jehovah there expressed was his own genuine feeling toward Ahuramazda, whom he recognized under the Hebrew name.¹ We now have ground for exactly reversing this. It is quite likely that he used the name "Jehovah," but appears certain that what he said of Jehovah had much less spiritual significance than has been supposed. One of the Cyrus inscriptions (the cylinder) contains similar expressions in regard to Merodach, the tutelary god of Babylon. Cyrus calls Merodach "the great lord," and "my lord."

¹ Stanley, *loc. cit.*, pp. 74, 75.

It was "by the command of Merodach, the great lord," he tells us, that he reinstated the gods of Shumir and Akkad. It was Merodach that "chose a king to conduct, after his own heart, what he committed to his hand—Cyrus, King of Ansan." It was "Merodach, the great lord," who directed Cyrus' march; "to his city of Babylon his course he summoned, and caused him to take the road to Tintir (Babylon)." It will not be claimed that this attitude toward Merodach excludes the possibility of a similar attitude toward Jehovah. On the contrary, if he thus speaks of the tutelary god of the conquered Babylon, it is all the more likely that he should, when concerned with another subject-nation, speak of their Jehovah in the same terms. But there would be as little of exclusive recognition and worship in the one case as in the other.

With this in mind we may glance at the

prophecies which foretold the agency of Cyrus in overthrowing Babylonian tyranny, and restoring the Hebrews. It is not at all surprising that, when they looked into the future, and discerned the work of Cyrus, the prophets should have regarded him as an agent of God, even as one especially chosen and anointed (*Id.*, xlv. 1). The priests of Merodach looked toward Cyrus as a deliverer; much more naturally would the Hebrews be inclined to welcome him, and to see the hand of their God in his victory, since the conquest which involved a foreign dominion for the Babylonians, meant freedom for them. The Old-Testament predictions which simply announce his coming to deliver the Hebrews, and punish their enemies, even those which especially declare that God had raised him up, do not, therefore, require particular comment. These predictions were fulfilled.

But it is manifest that the significance of a prediction like that of Isaiah xlv. 1-5 must appear in a new light. That part of this prediction which represents Cyrus as ignorant that Jehovah was using him for his own purposes does not now need explanation. But when we come upon this expression: "that thou mayst know that I am Jehovah, which call thee by thy name, the God of Israel" (verse 3), or this other, in some respects more noteworthy still (xli. 25): "from the rising of the sun shall he call upon (*or* proclaim) my name," the case is altered. Even the most recent commentator¹ does not hesitate to understand this as referring to a subjective change in Cyrus. "It is evidently," he says, "a prediction of a spiritual change to be wrought in Cyrus in consequence of his wonderful career." But is it admissible,

¹ T. K. Cheyne: Comm. on Isaiah, 3d ed., London, 1884.

in view of what we have already seen, to hold that the predictions were fulfilled in this sense? At all events, not so as to understand what we should mean by a "conversion" to Jehovah. We must consider the possibilities with some care. If we could be sure that Cyrus was at heart a follower of Zarathustra, we might indeed believe that some monotheistic zeal, controlled as to outward expression by the supposed needs of statesmanship, entered into his feeling toward Jehovah. But no inscription of his, yet found, breathes monotheism. Darius Hystaspis appears to us in his cuneiform monuments as a zealous worshipper of Ahuramazda, but not so Cyrus. We must, therefore, for the present, reason from the postulate that Cyrus was not a Zarathustrian at all. Such impartiality of respect to different deities as we observe in him might then be due to one of two causes. It might be

that he shared the belief of his time with regard to the local power of various divinities. He might really suppose that, since Merodach was god of Babylon, his firm possession of Babylon depended upon Merodach's favor, and that since Jehovah was god of the land of Israel, he must pay due respect to him in order to retain Israel under his control. In that case a real recognition of Jehovah, and a real proclamation of him as a deity would be involved, and we should have a distinct, though it might seem a meagre, fulfilment of the prediction. On the other hand, it might be that the religious professions of Cyrus were wholly at the service of his imperial policy. He might desire to secure the favor of the priests and people of Babylon by honoring their deity—avoiding the mistake of Nabonidus the vanquished king, who seems to have neglected that deity. In like manner, he

might aim, by active interest for Jehovah's name and temple, simply to secure the favor of another people and another priesthood, whom his policy led him to restore to their home on an important frontier of his empire. His religiousness would then be assumed, and the whole design of it would be to secure a more prompt recognition of his own sovereignty, and a more entire submission to his political measures. On this view, the prophecies would take on a different meaning. We could understand the one as carried out in the fact that Cyrus' deeds resulted, without his distinct purpose, in "proclaiming" the name of Jehovah, because Jehovah's people was set free and his worship re-established. We could understand the "that thou mayst know" of Is. xlv. 3, as indicating the gracious design of God, which might have been accomplished if Cyrus had given in his allegiance. Which of these lines of in-

terpretation is to be preferred, or whether there is some other still, need not here be determined. Enough has been said to show that the inscriptions give us a set of well-attested facts, which have their part to play, and must unquestionably assist in bringing about a future and better understanding of the scope of prophetic words.

I am quite aware that many persons would not regard it an advantage to find the fulfilment of these prophecies in a much less significant experience on the part of Cyrus than they had been accustomed to picture to themselves. But we must never forget that to have our particular interpretations confirmed is not the object for which we are to study the Bible. It is to get at the truth that is in the Bible. If our interpretation has been in any respect wrong, then it is a great advantage to have the means put into our hand of bringing it nearer the truth. Neither Assyriology nor

any other science may be forced into the service of prejudice.

In this connection we may inquire also how far the fate of Babylon and of its deities corresponds with the predictions concerning these. The seer declares that "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground" (Is. xxi. 9); "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle" (xlv. 1); "Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces" (Jer. l. 2). The destruction of Babylon is to be utter: "Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing without an inhabitant" (li. 37). That these and like declarations became facts in the course of the centuries we have not needed cuneiform inscriptions to tell us.

But it is worth noticing that in that aspect of the case with which the prophets would be most immediately concerned, their predictions were fulfilled under Cyrus, although—as, indeed, we knew before—he did not destroy Babylon and although he did not abolish idolatry. For not only was his conquest a real humiliation of the Babylonian people, but also—and this would be of prime interest to the prophets—it put a stop to the deportation policy of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, and secured a kind of national life—modest and dependent, it is true—to the exiled Hebrews. The Babylonian oppression and captivity came to an end with Cyrus. In the case of the idols, the matter is perhaps even more obvious. We should hardly, I think, satisfy ourselves with the suggestions¹ which have been made, to the effect

¹ Cf. Canon George Rawlinson, *Contemp. Review*, Jan., 1880, pp. 96 sq.

that, during the capture of the city of Babylon, actual breakages of idols might naturally occur, and that, further, the conquest of Cyrus brought about a change in the relative position of religions, Babylonian and other Shemitic idolatry going down, and Zarathustrianism coming up. For Cyrus' army entered Babylon without resistance, and even if the last stronghold had to be subdued by force, such a breaking of images as might have taken place would be a meagre fulfilment of the prophecy. Its most literal meaning can hardly have been met by the casual shattering of a few idols, to be followed by an honorable re-establishment and worship, such as Cyrus brought about for the Babylonian gods. And it was not a mere victorious monotheism that the prophets saw in Cyrus' conquest. It was deliverance for God's people, and a step onward toward the triumph of God's kingdom, which they

welcomed in it. The conflict, as they viewed it, was between religions, no doubt, but this in no abstract way. Its result should be to punish the oppressors of Jehovah's worshippers. The gods of Babylon should be shown up in their utter powerlessness to protect those oppressors. That in this essential meaning of the predictions their fulfilment came with Cyrus' victory is plain enough; the royal line which had wrought such harm to the Hebrew people, and so defied their Almighty God and King, was overthrown. Their idols did not save them. It is then as a real and specific accomplishment of what Jehovah's prophets had announced that we may read the words of Cyrus himself: "The ancient, royal family, of which Bel and Nebo had sustained the rule, . . . faded away when I entered victoriously into Tintir."

No one can be more fully aware than I am myself how inadequate a notion such a brief review, with illustrations selected almost at random, must give of the worth of Assyriology to the student of the Old Testament. If the attempt has been made to define somewhat strictly the limits of its availability, it has been equally the purpose to do such hurried justice as the time allowed to its value within those limits. The cuneiform inscriptions do not explain all the things that need explanation, from Genesis to Malachi, and they introduce grave problems of their own. But it is, for all that, largely by their aid, supplemented by modern discoveries in other archæological fields, that the inquiries about ancient peoples, which the eager mind of our day is putting so restlessly, can receive answers that begin to satisfy. We are coming, by degrees, to a time when we may construct a full and accurate his-

tory of those lands and those centuries which saw the growth, the development, the proud culmination, the ruin, and the partial recovery of the Hebrew national life. Our interest in that life is unique. It was the life which preserved to the world the knowledge of the Lord of lords; the life of the people to whom the law was given, and the promises were entrusted, and the prophets spoke, and the special deliverances of God were vouchsafed, that from their midst might spring the Deliverer of all men.

Therefore it is for us to welcome the light and knowledge that God has bestowed upon us; to rejoice in them with perfect confidence that they are for good and not for evil; to learn to use them honorably, and wisely, as it is fitting for Christian exegetes and critics to use them—and to be still on the alert, watching and listening for fuller wisdom, if the divine Providence shall send it to us.

Assyria has not spoken her last word to men, and probably will not in our day; Egypt is full of voices, only half interpreted; the Hittites, who once defied Assyria, and marched out to fight Egypt with undaunted front, have hardly yet begun to speak again, after a long stillness. Other words beside, uttered ages ago, but not yet audible to modern ears, may be on their way to us, out of the remote distance of the centuries. It is for us to catch these messages and understand them, that we may fit them into the great fabric of apprehended and acknowledged truth, to the enrichment of ourselves, and those who shall be reached by our ministry, and to the glory of our common Lord.

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